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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: BASRAH GOVERNOR ON THE ROPES?

REF: (A) BASRAH 53; (B) BASRAH 49; (C) BASRAH 55

CLASSIFIED BY: Ken Gross, Regional Coordinator, REO Basrah,  
Department of State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In an April 17 meeting with the Regional Coordinator (RC) for the Regional Embassy Office (REO) in Basrah, Ministry of Defense advisor Majed al-Sari confirmed the details of a plan (Ref A) to vote Governor Muhammad out of office. Though there is no timetable for the vote, he expects it to occur soon. Al-Sari is sanguine that the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) has the two-thirds majority needed to replace the governor with Badr Organization's Hassan al-Rashid and that the governor will not respond with widespread violence; however, al-Sari believes that individual council members and other supporters of the efforts to depose the governor could be targeted for assassination. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The RC for the Basrah REO met on April 17 with Majed al-Sari, the Ministry of Defense's Basrah-based advisor to discuss the latest permutations in the rumored plan to oust Basrah Governor Muhammad (see Ref A). Al-Sari confirmed the plan detailed in Ref B for the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC) to vote the governor out of office and replace him with Hassan al-Rashid. Majed al-Sari is particularly well positioned to be in the know of such efforts since he also has intelligence responsibilities, is an adversary of the governor's and is close friends with Sayid Yusif, a personal and political enemy of the governor.

¶3. (C) Al-Sari began the conversation by saying that it was a very dangerous period for him and Sayid Yusif. He said that both of them are under threat by Governor Muhammad's "death squad" commanded by the governor's brother, Ismail (see Refs B and C). However, the plan to get rid of the governor is set. A few mosques have called for a change in government, and according to al-Sari, the BPC has the votes necessary to replace the governor. It is now up to the BPC members to initiate the vote. Al-Sari confirmed that Sayid Yusif is a BPC member and said "he has been drawing a salary since April 14." Comment: The REO has not had confirmation that Sayid Yusif is officially a BPC member. At last week's council meeting, the question was discussed and then deferred. End Comment.

¶4. (C) The RC asked al-Sari whether the Fadillah militia or JAM might instigate a violent reaction in response to a BPC vote against the governor. Al-Sari said that there could be assassination attempts directed at BPC members who vote against the governor, but did not expect JAM to take to the streets in his support. Based upon conversations with JAM leaders and because of public antipathy towards the governor, al-Sari said that JAM would remain neutral. Similarly, al-Sari believes that there could be a split in Fadillah, with some members glad if

the governor and his brother, stains upon the party, were removed from power.

15. (C) Al-Sari commented that Hassan al-Rashid, the putative replacement for the governor (see Ref A), would be an improvement. Al-Sari said that al-Rashid is smart, politically savvy, possesses some morals and is easy to work with. He added that the BPC boycott against the British and the Danes would end with a change in government since that "had been a condition in the agreements to replace Muhammad with al-Hassan."

And in a twist on the connection between al-Rashid, the Badr Organization general secretary, and Iran, al-Sari opined that Iran hoped that Governor Muhammad remained in office since he has permitted Iranians to flow across the border from Iran.

16. (C) Comment: Majed al-Sari's confirmation of the plan described by Sayid Ghali in Ref (A) is no surprise - al-Sari, with his enmity towards the governor, would be knee-deep in any plan or conspiracy to vote the governor out of office. He was careful to emphasize that no actions would be taken that contravene the law. The vote will take place whenever the council members decide, and al-Sari's only concern was that individual members' fears of retribution by the governor could delay the action. Nonetheless, he expects the vote to take place soon.

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